



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

Environment home

About us

Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » Kakadu National Park

Parks and reserves

National Parks

Booderee National Park

Christmas Island National Park

Kakadu National Park

Visitor information

Visitor activities

Nature and science

Culture, history and World Heritage

Park Management

Contact

Permits

Latest news

Publications

Norfolk Island National Park

Pulu Keeling National Park

Uluru - Kata Tjuta National Park

Kakadu National Park

If you respect the land, then you will feel the land. Your experience will be one that you cannot get anywhere else in the world.

Brian Baruwei - Wurrkbarbar clan. Aboriginal traditional owner.

The name 'Kakadu' comes from an Aboriginal floodplain language called Gagudju which was one of the languages spoken in the north of the park at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although languages such as Gagudju and Limilngan are no longer regularly spoken, descendants of these language groups are still living in Kakadu. Aboriginal languages used in the Park today include Kunwinjku from the north-eastern region, Gun-djeihmi from the central region and Jawoyn from the southern region.

Kakadu National Park is managed jointly by its Aboriginal traditional owners and the Director of National Parks. The traditional owners are proud to share their country with visitors.

Kakadu Bird Week 10-15 October 2009

Kakadu's first bird week will be held in the heart of Kakadu National Park. [More information >>](#)

Visitor information and activities

Explore each of the unique regions of Kakadu National Park.



- [Visitor information](#)
- [Activites](#)
- [Visitor guide](#)
- [What's on guide](#)
- [Daily road report](#)

Culture and history

Discover the impressive Aboriginal rock art sites in Kakadu National Park.

- [Culture and history](#)
- [Rock art sites in Kakadu](#)



The regions, seasons, flora and fauna

Kakadu is place of exceptional beauty and great diversity. Explore each of the unique regions and the spectacular changes of the six seasons.

- [Regions of Kakadu](#)
- [Seasons](#)
- [Nature](#)



Kakadu - a National Landscape

Kakadu National Park is a [World Heritage listed place](#) and has been identified as a key element of Australia's great [National Landscapes](#)



Environment home
Parks and reserves
National Parks
Kakadu National Park
Nature and science
Flora
Fauna
Mammals
Birds
Reptiles
Amphibians
Fish
Invertebrates
Endangered or vulnerable animal species
Habitats
Climate
Seasons
Geology
Stone Country
Outliers
Lowlands
Southern Hills and Basins
Floodplains
Estuaries and Tidal Flats

About us

Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » Fauna



- Quick links
- [Visitor Guide](#)
 - [Latest news](#)
 - [Park information notes](#)
 - [Road conditions report](#)
 - [Kakadu Permits](#)
 - [Regions of Kakadu](#)
 - [Rock art gallery sites](#)
 - [Rock art history](#)
 - [Tour guide training](#)
 - [Safety in the Park](#)
 - [Contact the Park](#)

Fauna

The diverse environments of Kakadu National Park support an astonishing number of which have adapted to particular habitats. Some animals in the park are endangered or endemic (not found anywhere else in the world). Response conditions experienced in the Park, many animals change their behaviour at particular times of the day or night or at particular times of the year.

- [Mammals](#)
- [Birds](#)
- [Reptiles](#)
- [Amphibians](#)
- [Fish](#)
- [Invertebrates](#)
- [Endangered or vulnerable species](#)



Environment home

About us

Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Mammals



SHORT-EARED ROCK WALLABY KAKADU

Mammals

About 60 mammal species-marsupials and placental mammals-have been recorded in the rain forest. About 20 of them inhabit the open forest and woodlands and are nocturnal, making them difficult to see. Others, such as wallabies and kangaroos (macropods), restrict their activity to the day and are easier to see.

Marsupials are born in a very immature state, minute, blind and hairless. At birth, it works its way up its mother's abdomen, usually to a pouch, and attaches to a nipple, where it stays until it is fully developed. Although the name for the group derives from the Latin marsupium, meaning pouch, not every marsupial has permanent pouches. Among the marsupials found in Kakadu are eight species of possum, bandicoot, quoll, phascogale and antechinus.


Unlike marsupials, placental mammals develop wholly within the mother and are fully developed at birth. Among the placental mammals found in Kakadu are 2 marsupial species, one rodent species, one dog species and one dugong species.

Common or notable mammal species

- **Agile wallaby** *Macropus agilis* Gornobolah
- **Antilopine wallaby** *Macropus antilopinus* Garnday (female) Garnday
- **Black fruit bat** *Pteropus alecto* Na-ngamu
- **Black wallaroo** *Macropus bernardus* Barrk
- **Black-footed tree-rat** *Mesembriomys gouldii* Barri
- **Brown bandicoot** *Isodon macrourus* Yok
- **Brush-tailed phascogale** *Phascogale tapoatafa* Wumbu
- **Dingo** *Canis familiaris dingo* Dalkgen
- **Dugong** *Dugong dugong* Mardingunjunjuni
- **Northern quoll** *Dasyurus hallucatus* Njanjma
- **Short-eared rock wallaby** *Petrogale brachyotis* Badbong

Quick links

- [Visitor Guide](#)
- [Latest news](#)
- [Park information notes](#)
- [Road conditions report](#)
- [Kakadu Permits](#)
- [Regions of Kakadu](#)
- [Rock art gallery sites](#)
- [Rock art history](#)
- [Tour guide training](#)
- [Safety in the Park](#)
- [Contact the Park](#)



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Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

Environment home
Parks and reserves
National Parks
Kakadu National Park
Nature and science
Fauna
Mammals
Birds
Reptiles
Amphibians
Fish
Invertebrates
Endangered or vulnerable animal species

- About us
- Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Birds



Birds

Kakadu's many habitats support more than 280 species of birds, or about one-third of Australia's bird species. Some birds range over a number of habitats, but many are found in only one environment.

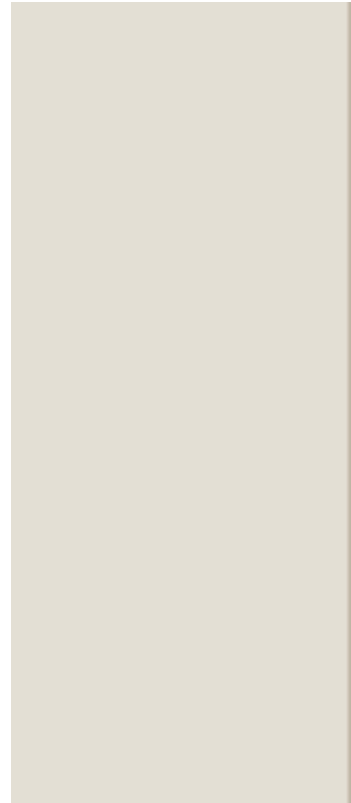
Peaceful doves and red-collared lorikeets are examples of widespread and common species; black-banded pigeons, white-lined honeyeaters and yellow chats are examples of species that occupy special, localised habitats; crested pigeons and pictorella mannikins are examples of species for which Kakadu is the northern limit of their range, so they are seen only occasionally.

Two notable species found in Kakadu are the endangered Gouldian finch and the vulnerable red goshawk.

A bird checklist is available from the Murrawuddi Gallery at the Bowali Visitor Centre. Tour operators and visitors are encouraged to report any unusual bird sightings, such as the Gouldian finch and the yellow chat.

Common or notable bird species

- **Barking owl** *Ninox connivens* [Mobbok](#)
- **Black kite** *Milvus migrans* [Marram](#)
- **Blue-winged kookaburra** *Dacelo leachii* [Galdurkk](#)
- **Burdekin duck** *Tadorna radjah* [Na-ngarralbak](#)
- **Bush thick-knee** *Burhinus grallarius* [Gurrwirluk](#)
- **Chestnut-quilled rock pigeon** *Petrophassa rufipennis* [Gurrbelak](#)
- **Comb-crested jacana** *Iredippara gallinacea* [Garlarrwidwid](#)
- **Green pygmy-goose** *Nettapus pulchellus* [Biwudj](#)
- **Jabiru** *Xenorhynchus asiaticus* [Djagarna](#)
- **Magpie goose** *Anseranas semipalmata* [Bamurru](#)



- **Partridge pigeon** *Geophaps smithii* [Ragul](#)
- **Plumed whistling-duck** *Dendrocygna eytoni* [Djurrbiyuk](#)
- **Rainbow bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* [Berrerdberrerd](#)
- **Rainbow pitta** *Pitta iris* [Worrbauworrbauk](#)
- **Red collared lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus* [Deded](#)
- **Red-tailed black cockatoo** *Calyptorhynchus magnificus* [Garnamarr](#)
- **Torresian crow** *Corvus orru* [Wakwak](#)
- **Whistling kite** *Haliastur sphenurus* [Marram](#)
- **White-bellied sea eagle** *Haleatus leucogaster* [Marrawuddi](#)

[Back to top](#)



Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

Environment home

About us

Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Reptiles

LONG NECK TURTLE KAKADÚ ROCK ART

Quick links

- [Visitor Guide](#)
- [Latest news](#)
- [Park information notes](#)
- [Road conditions report](#)
- [Kakadu Permits](#)
- [Regions of Kakadu](#)
- [Rock art gallery sites](#)
- [Rock art history](#)
- [Tour guide training](#)
- [Safety in the Park](#)
- [Contact the Park](#)

Fauna

Reptiles

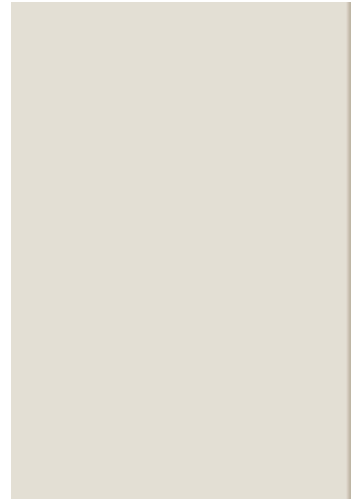
To date, 117 species of reptiles have been recorded in Kakadu. Being cold-blooded, reptiles rely on heat from an external source such as the sun to regulate their body temperature. Do not say that reptiles are active only during the day; in fact, few snakes come out during the midday heat and most are active at night. Always encourage use of a torch at night.

A variety of reptile species inhabit the Park, among them 11 types of turtles or monitor species, 37 skink species and 36 species of land snakes. Only considered potentially lethal to humans-the taipan, the death adder, the brown.

The crocodile is perhaps the reptile of most interest to visitors. Two species occur in Kakadu: the freshwater crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstonii*) and the estuarine crocodile (*C. porosus*). Freshwater crocodiles are easily identified by their narrow snout and four large 'scutes' (dermal plates) immediately behind the head. Estuarine crocodiles have these scutes and their snout is broader. The maximum size for a 'freshie' is 3 metres, while a 'saltie' can exceed 6 metres.

Common or notable reptile species

- **Arafura file snake** *Acrochordus arafurae* Na-wandak
- **Flatback turtle** *Chelonia depressa* Lumbybugan (Limilngan language)
- **Estuarine crocodile** *Crocodylus porosus* Ginga
- **Freshwater crocodile** *Crocodylus johnstonii* Gumugen
- **Frill-necked lizard** *Chlamydosaurus kingii* Narlangak
- **Gould's goanna** *Varanus gouldii* Galawan
- **Long-necked turtle** *Chelodina rugosa* Al-mangiyi
- **Merten's water monitor** *Varanus mertensi* Burarr




- **Olive python** *Liasis olivaceus* [Alngurruhmanj](#)
- **Pig-nosed turtle** *Carettochelys insculpta* [Warradjian](#)
- **Rough Knob-tail Gecko** *Nephurus asper* [Belerrk](#)

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| [Australian Government](#) 
| [ANBG](#)  | [Booderee](#) | [Christmas
Island](#) | [Kakadu](#) | [Norfolk Island](#) |
[Pulu Keeling](#) | [Uluru -
Kata Tjuta](#) |
[Marine protected areas](#) |



Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

- | |
|---|
| Environment home |
| Parks and reserves |
| National Parks |
| Kakadu National Park |
| Nature and science |
| Fauna |
| Mammals |
| Birds |
| Reptiles |
| Amphibians |
| Fish |
| Invertebrates |
| Endangered or vulnerable animal species |

[About us](#) [Contact us](#)

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Amphibians



Amphibians

Kakadu's frogs are extremely well adapted to the region's climatic extremes. Many remain dormant during rainless times. With the onset of the wet season, when the billabongs and swamps start to fill with water, the night air is filled with the sounds of frogs such as the northern bullfrog and the marbled frog.

As the water builds up frogs and tadpoles have an abundance of food, such as algae, vegetation, insects, dragonfly nymphs, and other tadpoles.

Not all of Kakadu's frogs are found in the wetlands: many, such as the green tree frog and the spadefoot toad, live in the lowland forests.

Common amphibian species

- **Green tree frog** *Litoria caerulea* Djangeredjingeredj
- **Copland's Rock Frog** *Litoria coplandi*



Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

- Endangered or vulnerable animal species

Fish

Fifty-three species of freshwater fish have been recorded in Kakadu's waterways; eight of them have a restricted distribution. In the Magela Creek system alone, 32 species have been found. In comparison, the Murray-Darling river system, the most extensive in Australia, supports only 27 native fish species.

Some species, such as the primitive archer fish, the sooty grunter, or black bream, and the toothless catfish, live mainly in clear water near the escarpment. In the billabongs and creeks, some of the more common fish are barramundi, freshwater long-toms, salmon-tailed catfish, chequered rainbow fish, and the saratoga. The last two also appear in waters near the escarpment.

Although introduced fish have been found in most Australian waterways, none have been recorded in the Park.

Recreational fishing (with lures) is permitted in waters west of the Kakadu Highway except in the West Alligator River System. To provide refuge areas, fishing is not permitted in waters east of the Kakadu Highway except at the camping areas of Muirella Park (Djarradjin and Sandy Billabongs) and Jim Jim Billabong. Cast nets, traps, spear guns and crab pots are not permitted but can be left at the Bowali Visitor Centre during your stay. Bag limits apply to barramundi and other species. Contact the Bowali Visitor Centre, telephone (08) 8938 1120 for up-to-date information.

Common or notable fish species

- **Archer fish** *Toxotes chatareus* Njarlgan
- **Barramundi** *Lates calcarifer* Na-marnkol
- **Long Tom** *Strongylura krefftii* Burdukkulung
- **Saratoga** *Scleropages jardini* Guluibirr
- **Sooty Grunter/Black Bream** *Hephaestus fuliginosus* Galarrk

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[| Australian Government](#)  [| ANBG](#)  [| Booderee](#) [| Christmas Island](#) [| Kakadu](#) [| Norfolk Island](#) [| Pulu Keeling](#) [| Uluru - Kata Tjuta](#) [| Marine protected areas](#) |



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

Environment home

About us

Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Invertebrates



TIGER BUTTERFLY KAKADU
PHOTO: SALLY GREENAWAY

Invertebrates

Despite the fact that Kakadu supports more than 10 000 types of insect, these creatures are often overlooked by visitors. Among the insect groups are grasshoppers, beetles, flies, termites, butterflies and moths, bees, wasps, ants, dragonflies and damsel flies, caddis flies, non-biting midges and mayflies. The great variety of insects is a result of the varied habitats and relatively high temperatures throughout the year.

Perhaps the most striking insect-created features in the Park are the termite mounds. The huge mounds in the southern part of the Park are storehouses of harvested grass.

Leichhardt's grasshopper, in colours of orange, blue and black, is perhaps the most spectacular insect found in Kakadu. It is also found on the Arnhem Land plateau and in Gregory National Park.

Common or notable insect species

- **Leichhardt's grasshopper** *Petasida ephippigera* Al-yurn
- **Green ant** *Oecophylla smaragdina* Gabo

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Parks and reserves

Kakadu National Park

- ## Contact us

You are here: [Environment home](#) » [Parks and reserves](#) » [National Parks](#) » [Kakadu National Park](#) » [Nature and science](#) » [Fauna](#) » Endangered or vulnerable animal species



Endangered or Vulnerable Animal Species

Seven species listed in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 occur in Kakadu National Park. None of the following species are restricted to the Park, but preservation of their wider habitat seems more and more problematic and the importance of Kakadu as a conservation area for them increases daily.

Listed as endangered

- **The Gouldian Finch** (*Erythrura gouldiae*)
- **The Loggerhead Turtle** (*Caretta caretta*)

Listed as vulnerable

- **The Red Goshawk** (*Erythrotriorchis radiatus*)
- **The False Water Rat** (*Xeromys myoides*)
- **The Golden-backed Tree Rat** (*Mesembriomys macrurus*)
- **The Pacific, or Olive, Ridley Turtle** (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)
- **The Green Turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*)